

heaven knows under what conditions, for the company frightens me terribly. But what would you have had me do ? I had no alternative, I had to go to that galley to ensure myself some little peace of mind. It would have rendered me so unhappy to have left the manuscript lying in a drawer."

The Theltre de Cluny was then a third or fourth rate little house in the Quartier Latin, and Zola's fears respecting its company were fully justified. To give an idea of the fate which befell his play it will be enough to mention that one of the " parts/" that of Ohapuzot, an octogenarian, was confided to a young fellow named Olona, who in his efforts to imitate an old man's voice ended by speaking like a "Punch." Nevertheless, there was no hissing at the first performance which was delayed until the 3d of November (1874); the demeanour of the audience being rather one of bewilderment, particularly when in the third act illness and death suddenly intruded into the midst of farce. But the critics did not hesitate. They damned the play even as they had damned " The*rese Baquin," " JLe Figaro " curtly declaring that it was repulsive, tiresome, and immoral; and after seventeen performances, given to well-nigh empty houses, except on Sundays when the shopkeepers and working-people of the district attended and laughed good-

naturedly,¹ "Les H^ritiers Eabourdin"
disappeared from
the stage without hope of revival.

But this was not Zola's only work during the
year 1874.

He had now moved from the Rue de La
Condamine to
21, Rue St. Georges (now Rue des Apennins) at
Batignolles.

supply to the Theatre de Cluny, but before doing so he
read it to his
intimates, who gave it so unfavourable a reception that he
renounced all idea
of having it performed.

¹ Alexis, *Lc.*, p. 139.